

Testimony of John Hartwell
Metro North New Haven Rail Commuter Council
Tuesday March 16th, 2010

Good afternoon Senator Looney, Representative Janowski, and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee.

I am honored to appear before you and to be nominated by Senator Williams to serve on the Metro North New Haven Rail Commuter Council.

As someone who lives within walking distance of the Greens Farms train station in Westport, and who commuted daily for nine years into New York on Metro North, I understand the vital role that our rail system plays in all our lives. And as an active Council participant since last August, I am keenly aware of the complex organizational and institutional structure that supports our transportation system, and for the need to have all the components working smoothly and cooperatively together to deliver the service that Connecticut's businesses and citizens depend on.

In addition to my recent work on the Council, I serve on the board of the library in Southport, as state treasurer of two related public policy non-profits, and most recently on the board of an environmental center in Westport. I've also been active politically as an organizer and as a candidate, and belong to and work closely with my local League of Women Voters and Rotary International. Through these activities I have strong connections to my community and direct knowledge of how the public and private sectors intersect.

We on the Council see ourselves as the voice of the customer. When proposals are floated to cut trains because of budgetary restraints, Council members weigh in with practical suggestions based on years of experience. When service is interrupted on a branch line because of equipment failure, the Council provides a forum to review operational response and make recommendations. And the information we learn in our monthly meetings with DOT and Metro North officials is communicated back to our constituency through our website, Facebook, and our annual report.

Protecting and strengthening the rail system is critical to Connecticut's future economic development, and the Rail Commuter Council is an important voice in shaping that effort. I'm eager to continue my work on the Council, and I ask for your support and confirmation.

Thank you.